

Yaoundé, 17th November 2006

Dear Friends,

MEcà'ni! This is one of the phrases for 'Greetings' in Limbum, the language spoken by the Wimbun people of northwest Cameroon. I have just returned from three weeks staying with a family in this stunningly beautiful part of Cameroon. It was a very special time for me. There is so much to tell that I thought I would send you a report now before I leave Cameroon. I had hoped to send a newsletter with some nice photos, but unfortunately our e-mail system currently has a problem with sending attachments and I have decided to send a typed report only rather than delay sending you anything.

Thank you for your prayers during my time in the village. It certainly had its challenges but I can truly say it was an amazing and very positive experience for me. Together with two other course participants I stayed with a lovely family at their compound in the mountains.

The head of the compound is Mami Esther. Living in the houses at the compound are her three daughters and their children, her daughter-in-law (whose husband works in a town during the week and returns on his days off) and their children. Mami Esther's 19-year-old grandson also lives at the compound and studies at the local secondary school. It was a great privilege to share in their lives for nearly three weeks, to see how they support their families primarily through subsistence farming, to experience life without electricity and plumbing, to walk long distances to reach market and church (40 minutes to church and the nearest market, while another day we walked 2 ½ hours to a larger town).

Our hosts excelled in the way they looked after us, for example fetching water for us from a nearby stream (where we also went to wash our clothes). I did fetch water occasionally for myself but could not carry it back on my head! Many people called to visit us and to bring us gifts, for example one morning a lady arrived to greet us at 7.00 a.m. and gave us a bucket of yams. Another day a neighbour brought us eggs, and someone else gave us bananas from her farm.

My favourite time of day was around 5.30 p.m. when the goats and chickens return to the compound for the night. During the day the goats roam into the bush to feed, returning from time to time during the day to rest (or to play in the case of the baby goats) and at night to sleep around the buildings and under the trees of the compound.

Grasshoppers for tea – on the morning of 9th November I got up to find great excitement among the people who were outside catching grasshoppers which were leaping in great numbers in the fields and bushes near the compound. I don't know much about grasshoppers, but apparently once a year, around Nov/Dec they arrive in a swarm which is a big event for the people who catch them, fry them and enjoy them as a real treat. Thankfully I had arranged to go out on a hike that day and therefore had a good excuse not to join in the grasshopper catching, but when I returned guess what we had with our evening meal? I ate two and left the rest for others to enjoy.

Our family attend a Baptist church in the village of Tabenken, about a 40-minute walk from the compound. I enjoyed very much attending church with them and experiencing the joy of their worship. In particular the offering period was a very joyful occasion, with much music and dancing as we all took our offerings to the front of the church, which included offerings of money as well as other items, particularly food. One week there was a special 'corn offering' when all the ladies brought corn to church, which would later be sold for the church.

In the evenings members of the family, including children and adults, spent time with us and we took the opportunity to help them start learning to read in their own Limbum language. Like many

languages in Cameroon, Limbum is basically an oral language, spoken by a large number of people as their mother tongue language but which they do not learn to read or write. In the Tabenken valley schools the children learn to read and write English and some French but they are not taught to read their own mother tongue language, which we found very sad, particularly because in 2002 a translation of the New Testament was completed in Limbum which most people are not actually able to read.

Prayer and praise

Please pray for the Wimbun people of northwest Cameroon, in particular that they will learn to read the Bible in their mother tongue language - Limbum.

Please pray for those who are working to develop literacy programmes in mother tongue languages in Cameroon.

Please pray for the congregation of Tabenken Baptist church.

Please pray for me during my time of transition during the next few weeks.

Praise God for the kindness and hospitality of Mami Esther and her family.

Praise God for leading me to the situation that was just right for me for village phase.

Praise God for continuing good health.

Praise God for all I have learned and experienced during AOC.

This gives you a small flavour of my experiences in the village. As I write it doesn't seem quite real that within the next three weeks I will have left Cameroon, visited the UK for a week, and arrived in Mali. I am really grateful to God for the time I have spent in Cameroon, which has been a very positive experience for me, and I would be grateful for your prayers during the coming weeks of transition.

With very best wishes
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